

ASK THE TIC

TRADE EVENT RESOURCES

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Exhibiting at a trade show to boost your business both domestically as well as abroad can come in many forms. This article is designed to present several different ways that companies can reach foreign buyers with varying degrees of risk and expense.

WHAT IS THE VALUE IN EXHIBITING AT A TRADE SHOW OR OTHER EVENT?

Trade shows serve as vital marketplaces for buyers and sellers. They are showplaces for introducing new products, transacting business, shopping and research, all in one location for greatest efficiency. Participating in trade events is vital to conducting business and maintaining a visual presence in an industry.

Trade show attendees today are serious shoppers with sophisticated visiting strategies. Up to 60 percent of trade show attendees are part of a buying team. In some cases, a prospective customer will send a buying team to visit exhibits and then hold a caucus on the spot to assess which exhibits will be revisited.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF PARTICIPATING IN A TRADE SHOW?

Making trade shows work for you means providing answers and solutions with personal attention to visitors. The most effective exhibitors notify a strong list of potential customers of their presence in an upcoming trade event, keep records of all visitors and promptly follow up with all prospective buyers after the event.

A significant investment in the quality of the exhibit is also important. Here are some helpful hints to a successful exhibit booth:

- **Grab attention:** Advertise a benefit instead of your company name.
- **Improve communication:** Display a photographic storyboard with the stages of your product's use to reach the 10-30 percent of international attendees.
- **Create a selling zone:** Make sure there is plenty of browsing space and allow visitors to approach displays easily.

- **Be Approachable:** Don't eat or chat amongst yourselves at your booth. Look ready to help customers.



WHAT KINDS OF TRADE EVENT PROGRAMS DOES THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE OFFER?

The Department of Commerce International Trade Administration (ITA) offers a number of affordable trade events ranging from Virtual Matchmakers to Trade Missions. Each trade event offers exposure to foreign buyers as well as support by knowledgeable staff both domestically and abroad.

Reaching Overseas Buyers in Their Markets:

Trade Missions: The Department of Commerce organizes a variety of trade missions each year specific to the needs of American companies. The goal of these missions is to connect U.S. businesses to qualified foreign buyers and produce export sales of U.S. goods and services. Trade missions provide a flexible and adaptable format to conduct business overseas. They feature individual business appointments tailored to each mission member's needs and incorporate meetings with government officials in the target market.

Missions usually include market reports and briefings by local experts and networking with officials and business executives. Plant and factory tours or seminar format for technical products may also be included.

Matchmaker Missions focus on entering new markets and finding representation for smaller business. Additionally, state agencies and private-sector export promotion organizations arrange many trade missions that may be certified, supported and led by the Department of Commerce. The Matchmaker program has recently conducted several Virtual Matchmakers, which give U.S. businesses the opportunity to meet with groups of pre-screened international business prospects during an interactive video conference focusing on your industry. Successful Virtual Matchmakers have been conducted with the franchising industry and wine exporters to the Philippines.

U.S. Pavilions: For an international trade show, you might consider participating in an official U.S. Pavilion. Each year the Department of Commerce selects trade fairs in prime markets worldwide for recruitment of a U.S. pavilion. The Commerce Department also certifies a variety of trade show organizers to recruit and manage U.S. pavilions worldwide. Government involvement ensures a high visibility U.S. pavilion at each exhibit and provides exhibitors with complete support from Commerce or U.S. Commercial Service staff at U.S. embassies. Fees depend upon the country and exhibitors receive pre- and post-event logistical

support and extensive overseas market promotional campaigns to attract appropriate business audiences.

Catalog Shows and Product Literature Centers: As an alternative to trade shows, ITA offers Catalog Shows and Product Literature Centers, which are a low-cost, efficient way for small firms to get worldwide sales leads without leaving the office. A Commerce Department Trade Development industry specialist or U.S. Commercial Service specialist from the U.S. embassy showcases U.S. company product literature, samples, videos and other visuals in fast growing export markets around the world. Some catalog shows may be organized by state governments and certified by Commerce, with added U.S. Government assistance.

Reaching Foreign Buyers in Your Backyard

The International Buyer Program (IBP) recruits more than 125,000 foreign end-users and distributors to meet with U.S. companies at top U.S. trade shows. The Commerce Department staff helps organize meetings with qualified buyers and provides matchmaking services and business counseling to help you generate sales. Each show features an international business center where services are provided to international visitors and exhibitors, including on-site facilities for private meetings.

The Commerce Department sends specialists from ITA's Trade Information Center (TIC), industry offices, Census Bureau and the U.S. Commercial Service worldwide network to many key trade shows in the United States. These experts can provide in-depth counseling sessions to all U.S. companies interested in expanding their export markets.



WHAT ABOUT "VIRTUAL" TRADE SHOWS AND MISSIONS?

With the ever-expanding B2B market and the capability to conduct transactions over the Internet, online product displays can reach millions of viewers daily. The BuyUSA.com program is an online matchmaker service that can be a virtual trade show for participating companies. BuyUSA.com is a full-service web site, which enables U.S. companies to display an online catalog and get instant access to qualified foreign distributors, buyers and sales leads; automated trade lead matching; customized counseling from ITA; and much more.

The Commerce Department may also organize and host a number of virtual trade shows and trade missions on the Internet, as well as videoconference matchmaker services each year, depending on demand. Plus, individual, tailored videoconference "gold key" services can be arranged for a fee. Find out about these services by contacting (800) USA-TRAD(E) or your local Export Assistance Center.



WHERE CAN I FIND A LIST OF TRADE EVENTS THAT SUPPORT MY INDUSTRY?

A listing of domestic and international trade events sponsored all or in part by the Department of Commerce can be found on the Internet at www.export.gov, behind the quick reference link 'trade events.' This database is searchable by event location, type, industry, or date. You can also call (800) USA-TRAD(E), contact your industry specialist, or your local export assistance center for more information.

A number of private resources are also available over the Internet to help one find appropriate trade events for a particular product and assist with planning an exhibition. For example, Trade Show Central www.tscentral.com, provides information on trade shows, convention facilities and service providers. Trade Show News Network, www.tsnn.com, helps locate and compare information about trade shows, exhibitors, industry suppliers and convention facilities. The trade show associations listed at the end of this article may also assist with navigating the several thousand events in the United States and worldwide. An industry trade association is also a good source. ■

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Trade Information Center

Tel: (800) USA-TRAD(E)

Email: tic@ita.doc.gov

www.export.gov/tic

Trade Show Exhibitors Association

Tel: (312) 842-TSEA (8732)

Email: tsea@tsea.org

www.tsea.org

Society of Independent Show Organizers

Tel: (877) YES-SISO (391-7476)

www.siso.org

International Association of Fairs and Expositions

Tel: (417) 862-5771, 800-516-0313

Email: iafe@fairsandexpos.com

www.fairsandexpos.com

Connected International Meeting Professionals Association

Tel: (703) 978-6287

Email: info@meetingprofessionals.org

www.meetingprofessionals.org

The Trade Information Center (TIC) is operated by the International Trade Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce for the 19 federal agencies comprising the Trade Promotion Coordinating Committee. These agencies are responsible for managing the U.S. Government's export promotion programs and activities. You, too, can "Ask the TIC" by calling 1-800-USA-TRAD(E) toll free, Monday through Friday, 8:30-5:30 EST. Or visit the TIC's website at www.export.gov/tic.